2020 Public Use Microdata Areas Program (PUMA) Naming Guidelines

September 2021

Background

State Data Centers (SDCs) provide PUMA names and codes with their 2020 PUMA submission. The Geographic Update Partnership Software (GUPS) stores this information and bundles these attributes during the export process. As the Census Bureau conducts their review of 2020 PUMA submissions, staff will work closely with SDCs to ensure the names observe the guidelines in this material. Because these geographies and their attributes appear in public products (e.g., demographic, housing, and geographic products), the Census Bureau has final approval on all names and codes.

The *2010 PUMA Names File* that includes both the PUMA name and code for the nation is available on the [PUMA website](). Participants in 2020 PUMA may find this reference file useful to copy/paste the names and codes into GUPS rather than re-typing the information.

Basic Concepts and Nomenclature

PUMA names should clearly identify the geographic extent of the PUMA by identifying a concise area name that is also meaningful to data users. They should be as short and concise as possible while still being descriptive, clear, and unique within the state. Adequate PUMA names provide a means for easily understanding and identifying the geographic location of each PUMA. They should generally reference the geographic areas within the PUMA containing the most population, housing, and/or area. These could be the county, place (incorporated place and census designated place (CDP)), county subdivisions, American Indian reservation and/or off-reservation trust land, military installation, national park, and/or prominent physical feature. Another factor in naming could be the geographic relationship within or to another geographic area or well-known region (e.g., Northeast Utah, West Loudoun, Florida Panhandle).

The following guidelines refer to associations that the PUMA names have with the communities and features their name represents. The Census Bureau may edit submitted names as necessary for consistency and adherence to rules and guidelines described in this document.

1) PUMAs may be named after the largest population center, administrative division, or historically central place within its boundary. Names of incorporated places, CDPs, and county subdivisions are acceptable (e.g., Burbank in California and Taos in New Mexico).
2) PUMAs may be named after a populous American Indian reservation (AIR) within its boundary (e.g., Navajo Nation Reservation and Hopi Reservation in Arizona).
3) PUMAs may be named after a legal (e.g., county or incorporated place) or statistical geography (e.g., CDP).
   - The geographic type, area descriptor, and/or compass direction may be appended to the name to identify the geographic entity being described. This is especially important where a name alone may cause confusion for data users. Examples of this style include South San Bernardino County, San Bernardino City South, and Irvine South in California and Huntsville City (Central & South) in Alabama.
4) PUMAs may be named after a prominent physical feature (e.g., Denali or Cook Inlet in Alaska), a prominent land area in which it is partially or wholly located (e.g., Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming), or a distinctive region within the county or state (e.g., Everglades or Lower Keys in Florida).
5) Where a PUMA contains multiple centers or counties with relatively equal importance, the PUMA name should represent no more than three of the centers or counties. If unclear which to include in the name, use another guideline to name the PUMA.

6) Where there is no clear cultural focus or topographic name that can be applied to a PUMA, PUMA names can consist of the state or county name and a compass direction to indicate the portion of the state or county in the PUMA. The directional indicator should precede the state and county name (e.g., Northeast Colorado or Southwest Alabama). *Note. In all other instances, the state name or abbreviation should not be appended to the name.*

Naming Convention Rules and Guidelines

The information in this section pertains to the structural components of the PUMA name apart from its origin or association to the communities or features it represents.

1) PUMA names must not exceed 85 characters.
2) PUMA names must be unique within the state.
3) PUMA names must not include the state name or abbreviation, except where there is no clear cultural focus or topographic name that can be applied to the PUMA, as described above in #7.
4) PUMA names may include hyphens to connect the names of multiple geographic areas.
5) PUMA names representing multiple geographic areas joined by hyphens should be presented in the order of population size or regional importance, listing the most populous or most important first.
6) PUMA names must use the Roman alphabet as normally used for writing the English language. See **Table 1** for a list of valid characters for use in PUMA names.

Table 1: Valid Standard Characters for PUMA Names

Character(s)	Description
A-Z	Uppercase letters
a-z	Lowercase letters
0-9	Numbers
blank	Single blanks, not two or more consecutive blanks.
'	Apostrophe
(	Open parenthesis
)	Close parenthesis
/	Forward slash
,	Comma
&	Ampersand
.	Period
-	Hyphen

7) PUMA names may use diacritical marks (i.e., accents, rings, tildes, and umlauts). See **Table 2** for a list of acceptable diacritical marks taken from the Latin character set (ISO-8859-I).

Table 2: Acceptable ISO-8859-I (Latin Character Set) Characters for PUMA Names

Character	Code	Description
Á	193	A acute
Å	197	A ring
É	201	E acute
Í	205	I acute
Ñ	209	N tilde
Ó	211	O acute
Ú	218	U acute
Ü	220	U umlaut
á	225	a acute
å	229	a ring
é	233	e acute
í	237	i acute
ñ	241	n tilde
ó	243	o acute
ú	250	u acute
ü	252	u umlaut

8) PUMA names may include a limited number of abbreviations. PUMA names that use the words Saint or Sainte, Air Force Base, and Air Reserve Base must be abbreviated as follows: St., Ste., AFB, and ARB, respectively per Census Bureau naming rules. Except as described above in #3, use of state abbreviations is discouraged. Use of all other abbreviations are discouraged and must be approved by the Census Bureau.

Contact Information

For questions or clarification about these guidelines, contact the Census Bureau staff involved with the 2020 PUMA at <geo.puma@census.gov> for assistance.